

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

HEARING #22-11983

MARCH 28, 2022

10:30 A.M.

ND-2022-6-C:

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS, INC. — *Allowable Ex Parte Briefing Regarding (1) Charter's business profile and impact both nationally and in South Carolina; (2) Challenges, opportunities, and solutions to reducing the "digital divide" and timely deploying broadband services where they are needed most; (3) Charter's commitment, progress, and ideas toward the timely deployment of broadband services in South Carolina.*

**ALLOWABLE EX PARTE
BRIEFING**

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Justin T. WILLIAMS, CHAIRMAN
Florence P. BELSER, VICE CHAIR; *and* COMMISSIONERS Carolyn L.
'Carolee' WILLIAMS, Stephen M. 'Mike' CASTON, Thomas J.
'Tom' ERVIN^[A/V], Headen B. THOMAS, and Delton W. POWERS, JR.

ADVISOR TO COMMISSION: Sandra V. Moser
STAFF COUNSEL

STAFF PRESENT: Jocelyn Boyd, Chief Clerk/Executive Director; Randy Erskine, Information Technology Staff; Melissa Purvis and Gwen Richardson, Livestream Technical Staff; Officer Joe Biggs, Security Staff; and Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M|GNSC, Court Reporter

APPEARANCES:

ANDREW J. D'ANTONI, ESQUIRE, legal representative, and **MITCHELL WILLOUGHBY, ESQUIRE**, presenter and legal representative of/for **CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS, INC.**, together with PRESENTERS **MARVA JOHNSON** [Group VP – State Government Affairs], **MICHAEL CHOWANIEC** [VP – State Regulatory Affairs], and **BEN BREAZEAL** [Sr. Director – State Government Affairs].

CHRISTOPHER M. HUBER, ESQUIRE, Designee of the Executive Director of the **SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF**

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Please note the following inclusions/attachments to the record:

- Presentation Slides (PDF)

P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Public Service Commission of South Carolina. We're here for an allowable ex parte briefing.

Before we get started, please join me in a brief moment of silence.

[Brief pause]

Thank you, very much. We're going to call roll. Present in the hearing room we have Commissioners representing Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7. Joining us virtually we have Commissioner Ervin.

Attorney Moser, if you would, please read the docket.

MS. MOSER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Commissioners, and to all who are present here today either in person or virtually. Today is Monday, March 28th, 2022, and we are here in the Commission's hearing room pursuant to a Notice of Request for an Allowable Ex Parte Briefing from Charter Communications, Incorporated.

The subject matter noticed to be discussed today relates to Charter Communications, Inc., as a

business here in South Carolina and nationally.

This, I would remind everyone, is a briefing and not a hearing. The briefing must be conducted in compliance with the provisions of South Carolina Code Section 58-3-260(C), and the requirements of that statute are, in part, that the allowable ex parte briefing be confined to the subject matter which has been noticed. Charter Communications, Inc., shall present information to the Commission at this allowable ex parte on the following items: First, Charter's business profile and its impact, both nationally and in South Carolina; second, its challenges, opportunities, and solutions to reducing the digital divide and timely deploying broadband services where they are needed most; third, Charter's commitment, progress, and ideas toward the timely deployment of broadband services in South Carolina.

I would, therefore, ask the presenters, the Commissioners, and Staff to please refrain from discussing any matters not related to the specific topics.

The statute prohibits any presenter, Commissioners, or Commission Staff from requesting or giving any commitment, predetermination, or

1 prediction regarding any action by any Commissioner as
2 to an ultimate issue which either is or is likely
3 to come before the Commission.

4 I would also ask the presenters, the Staff and
5 the Commissioners to refrain from referencing any
6 report, article, statute, or document of any kind
7 that are not included in today's presentation. A
8 copy of any document which is referred to during
9 the briefing must be provided to the Office of
10 Regulatory Staff for inclusion into the record,
11 which will be certified by_[sic] the Chief Clerk of the
12 Commission, Ms. Jocelyn Boyd.

13 If anyone, during the course of this briefing,
14 exceeds the scope or does not comply with or fails
15 to conduct themselves within the provisions of
16 South Carolina Code Section 58-3-260, governing
17 allowable ex parte briefings, it is expected that a
18 contemporaneous objection will be made.

19 And, finally, everyone in attendance today –
20 either in person or virtually – must sign in or
21 register. Everyone in the hearing room or watching
22 virtually must read, sign, and return the form
23 which you were given at the door or the form which
24 will be e-mailed to you for your virtual
25 appearance, which will include instructions and the

1 deadline for its return. It is required by law for
2 each attendee – whether attending virtually or in
3 person – to certify that the requirements contained
4 in Section 58-3-260(C) have been complied with in
5 this presentation.

6 Thank you-all for your time and your
7 attention. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll turn it
8 back to you.

9 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Thank you, Attorney
10 Moser.

11 Office of Regulatory Staff?

12 **MR. HUBER:** Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Madam
13 Vice Chair, members of the Commission. My name is
14 Chris Huber and I'm General Counsel for the South
15 Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff. I'm here
16 today as the designee of ORS's Executive Director
17 for the purposes of today's briefing.

18 I have nothing further at this time. Thank
19 you.

20 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** All right. Attorney
21 Willoughby?

22 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
23 Vice Chair, members of the Commission. Thank you
24 very much for allowing us to appear before you
25 today.

1 My name, for the record, is Mitchell
2 Willoughby. I'm an attorney, here in Columbia,
3 South Carolina, with the law firm of Willoughby &
4 Hoefer. With me today is Andrew D'Antoni, an
5 attorney with our firm, as well.

6 I will, at this time, Mr. Chairman, introduce
7 our members from Charter that will be presenting,
8 and will allow them to then do the presentation.
9 I'll also be making a part of the presentation.

10 With us today is Marva Johnson, who is Group
11 Vice President for State Government Affairs, with
12 Charter. Next to her is Mike Chowaniec, who is
13 Vice President, State Regulatory Affairs, for
14 Charter. And next to Marva on the other side is
15 Ben Breazeale, who is Senior Director, State
16 Government Affairs, for South Carolina. And it's
17 all of our pleasure to appear before you today.

18 Mr. Chairman, if this is okay with you and the
19 members of the Commission, when I cover a couple of
20 slides that will be part of the presentation, I'll
21 do so from the bench there [indicating], if that's
22 okay with the Commissioners.

23 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** That's fine.

24 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** Thank you, very much. And
25 with that, I think our presentation is ready to be

1 brought up, and then we will turn it over to Marva,
2 who will make our opening remarks and begin the
3 presentation.

4 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Thank you.

5 [Reference: Presentation Slides 1-2]

6 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Thank you-all –
7 [indicating]. Thank you-all. This is very
8 exciting for us. If you haven't heard, we are
9 really leaning in on the broadband challenge and
10 working as hard as we can to help solve the digital
11 divide.

12 We had an opportunity to spend some time with
13 a few of you at SEARUC last year. We shared some
14 data points about some of the challenges as it
15 relates to the digital divide nationally, as well
16 as specifically within South Carolina and our
17 efforts in South Carolina. I guess some good
18 reading references, the Broadband Crash Course and
19 Farm Fresh Broadband that I think are going to help
20 us move forward well here. But today we're going
21 to talk about Charter and we're going to talk a
22 little bit about our national footprint,
23 specifically what we're doing here in the State of
24 South Carolina. We're going to talk about the
25 broadband digital divide. We're going to talk

1 about some solutions to address the challenge here
2 in South Carolina. And then we're going to talk
3 about how we believe we're helping to make sure
4 we're ready to move forward to close that divide as
5 swiftly as possible.

6 Just to keep it interesting, we're going to
7 flip between presenters, here, so hopefully it will
8 make it more interesting and give you a greater
9 selection of thoughts here. So thanks again, and
10 we are very honored to have the opportunity to
11 share this discussion with you-all today.

12 [Reference: Presentation Slide 3]

13 **MR. MICHAEL CHOWANIEC [CHARTER]:** Good
14 morning. My name is Mike Chowaniec. Mr. Chairman,
15 members of the Commission, pleased to be with you
16 here today.

17 I will touch briefly on – the slide
18 disappeared on me. There we go – no, the one
19 before that, please. There we are.

20 So, to briefly just introduce ourselves at a
21 national level, we have a couple of metrics there
22 that I think give you a sense of who we are as a
23 company nationally, and Ben will touch upon the
24 state-specific metrics in a second.

25 So, interesting, as you look at those numbers,

1 a couple of things that stand out: One is – and
2 this is consistent with kind of how the industry
3 has trended, you know, over the last decade. We
4 are very much a broadband company, right? I think
5 folks look at us as, you know, a cable company, but
6 if you look at those metrics, literally we have
7 twice as many broadband customers today, relative
8 to what we provide in terms of video service. So
9 not a surprise, but it is a pretty startling metric
10 if you look at how this industry has evolved over
11 the last few years.

12 The other thing that stands out there – and
13 for those of you who may be in our service area
14 here in South Carolina – we are very much a growing
15 mobile company. That number, as we approach 3
16 million customers, is pretty remarkable in a
17 relatively short period of time. And I think
18 what's happening there is it's a blend of us
19 offering very attractive mobile offerings. We're
20 competing on price, right? We're giving folks
21 another option on wireless, and it presents us with
22 an interesting business opportunity because we're
23 blending leveraging Verizon's network, where we
24 have a business relationship with them, and what we
25 have as our own infrastructure. So it's really

1 positioned us very effectively in the wireless
2 space and I think, as you look at larger issues
3 here in South Carolina, the State and we as a
4 company have an opportunity to support you and for
5 you to derive benefits from the fact that we can
6 bring economies of scale. We're well-capitalized
7 and we're constantly innovating and making the
8 investments we need to deliver new products and
9 services to your State.

10 [Reference: Presentation Slide 4]

11 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Good morning,
12 Commissioners. My name is Ben Breazeale. I'm the
13 local Senior Director here in South Carolina for
14 Charter, and I have the opportunity to describe to
15 you a little bit more about our profile in the
16 State.

17 We are large nationally, as Mike talked about,
18 but the interesting thing about Charter and the
19 cable company in South Carolina, in general, is
20 that we started through small entrepreneurs back in
21 the '70s, so we are in a lot of small communities
22 already. Obviously, the point of today's topic is
23 rural broadband. We are already in a lot of small
24 towns – Quinby, Lane, Coward, Cowpens – all across
25 the State, because it started with small rural

1 communities that couldn't get cable television.
2 Obviously, now, we're a broadband company and we
3 are going to be making extensive growth into much
4 more rural areas, much more lower-density areas
5 than we are now. But even though we are a large,
6 economy-of-scale company, we – our roots actually
7 start very rural.

8 We have 954,000 customers served in South
9 Carolina. We have 3,165 employees as of December
10 31st of 2021. And you may have seen in the news
11 last week we just announced 350 new jobs in our
12 West Columbia location, so that number will be 3500
13 employees by the end of the year. We're going to
14 service all the broadband growth.

15 We paid \$110 million in taxes and fees, last
16 year, and we made \$243 million in capital
17 investment in South Carolina.

18 So, again, our focus now is expanding
19 broadband access across South Carolina. You see
20 our existing footprint in the slide, in the dark
21 blue. We'll go into this a little bit more in the
22 presentation, but our job is to move into the more
23 lower-density areas, but we have a great basis of
24 coverage in South Carolina today to help solve this
25 problem. Thank you.

[Reference: Presentation Slide 5]

MR. MICHAEL CHOWANIEC [CHARTER]: And as we look at, you know, the things that we're working on as a company, over the last few years we've gotten a variety of different awards for things we've been working on in terms of investment and deployment, but I think it's this one, you know, recently that I think stands out in our mind as something we would bring to your attention, and I think it reflects the fact that rural broadband deployment, as Ben said, is very much in our DNA. For those of us who started at legacy Charter – and I was there a few years before the merger – you know, I was visiting small towns in that case, you know, around the Northeast US, New York, Massachusetts, and other states, and we were talking to them about partnerships and we were talking to them about build-out. And this was five or six years ago, right? So while this may be very much a pressing issue at this moment in time, it's something where we've got a long-standing history and I think have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to work in this space, and I think that's reflected by the fact that we're being recognized on that basis.

[Reference: Presentation Slides 6-7]

1 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** That positions
2 us well to go into a more in-depth conversation
3 about South Carolina and the digital divide here.

4 So, as both Mike and Ben mentioned, we are
5 committed to serving rural America. About 30
6 percent of our existing network is already in rural
7 locations. And as we talked about, even our build-
8 outs here in South Carolina for 2021, alone, we
9 extended our plant to 44,000 unserved locations
10 here in the State of South Carolina; all of those
11 locations were not rural locations, but we're
12 constantly making investment and trying to reach
13 more homes and more businesses to extend service
14 places where there was not service before.

15 And when we looked at the – if you look at the
16 FCC's most recent reports, the FCC's Broadband
17 Deployment Report, which was released earlier this
18 year – or, earlier in 2021 – estimated that there's
19 14½ million Americans who don't have access to
20 broadband service 25/3. Right here in South
21 Carolina, that's about 451,000 South Carolinians
22 who do not have access to 25/3 speed, and that's,
23 again, based on the Federal Communications
24 Commission's Broadband Deployment Report
25 statistics.

[Reference: Presentation Slide 8]

MR. MICHAEL CHOWANIEC [CHARTER]: And on this – [indicating]. On this slide we're referencing a report that you have access to, and we're happy to answer questions about, but I think the takeaways here are really, I think, what all of you know intuitively, right, which is there is a real economic cost to delays in broadband deployment. I mean, it obviously impacts people's lives in a very real way. For those of us who have school-age children, in particular, what they need to do and what we need to do as parents, right, in terms of managing their education, is really – is something that you can't take for granted. And as I often say, if I wasn't e-mailing with a teacher or annoying my kids by monitoring their grades, right, which I know their grades before they do, you know, how would one, you know, manage their education, right? It kind of – we take it for granted, right?

And this, I think, tags, you know, for your benefit, the real economic cost of delay, right? It's an economic cost to those people who are directly impacted – those families, those businesses – but also to society in general, right?

1 We're not benefiting from them being connected, and
2 that's costing all of us and costing the State of
3 South Carolina.

4 And, you know, we're honored by the fact that,
5 you know, the federal government – and we're going
6 to touch on other investments today – the federal
7 government stepped up, you know, with RDOF, which
8 is the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and South
9 Carolina was a large recipient of those funds.
10 We're honored by the fact that we were a major
11 awardee of those funds, and that's something that
12 we're going to be working on in the coming years,
13 as we continue to expand our network here in the
14 State.

15 [Reference: Presentation Slide 9]

16 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** And we've talked
17 a bit about network expansion, and we'll go through
18 that in more detail and talk about our investment
19 and continued build-out here in South Carolina.

20 But we understand that it's not about access
21 for every family. For many families, it's actually
22 about affordability. And so, as we look to do our
23 part in extending service to all families, we're
24 very pleased to be a part of the affordability –
25 Affordable Connectivity Program. And what it

1 actually gives us an opportunity to do is to merge
2 two programs. We, for years, had our Spectrum
3 Internet Assist Program, which provides service for
4 families who are free- and reduced-lunch eligible,
5 also for elderly individuals who are SSI-eligible.
6 And that service we priced in the marketplace at
7 \$17.99 a month, and that allowed these families to
8 have access to 30 meg. service.

9 What we're now adding to that affordability
10 platform and portfolio for our customers, in all
11 markets – not just select markets, so, as we extend
12 our service into rural areas and as we build out
13 our RDOF locations, not only will those residents
14 have access to our ETC services for telephone
15 service, they'll also have access to our Spectrum
16 Internet Assist Program, as well as the Affordable
17 Connectivity Program, which is the new program that
18 the Federal Communications Commission has
19 transitioned to.

20 The wonderful thing about the Affordable
21 Connectivity Program – affectionately known as
22 “ACP” – is that allows the consumer to choose the
23 service that works for their family. So, it's not
24 a preset package or speed. Those families get a
25 preset \$30 credit, so that if you'd like to have a

1 higher-speed tier for your family, you can make
2 that choice; you still get the \$30 credit.

3 It also allows these families to have multiple
4 options to have access to the program. So, in
5 other words, if you're eligible for our Spectrum
6 Internet Assist Program, then you're also going to
7 be eligible for the ACP program. It extends the
8 program to families who are eligible under SNAP,
9 some of the other tribal programs that give you
10 access to broadband discounts. So it gives us a
11 much broader range of customers who will also, now,
12 be eligible for the \$30 credit under ACP.

13 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** May – excuse me,
14 Chairman, if I might.

15 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Yes.

16 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** And I don't know who
17 would or could answer. You know, we've talked
18 about rural areas, rural locations, and digital
19 divide. And I've heard that a lot – not here, but
20 I mean just a lot in the last, you know, few months
21 and everything else. And I've never really heard
22 anyone kind of define exactly what that is. What –
23 what does that mean, I guess? It's been mentioned
24 like rural locations and rural areas. I mean, I
25 grew up in the country in Chester. You can't get

1 much more rural than that. But I don't know what
2 else that includes in, like, this digital divide.
3 I think I know, but...

4 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Commissioner
5 Caston, I love that you asked that question. I
6 gave a similar presentation to an economic group a
7 couple of months ago in Florida, and that was – we
8 actually had a slide on that, because it varies in
9 terms of actual definitions, but the broadly
10 accepted expectation of what you're referencing
11 when you're referring to the "digital divide," it
12 includes a couple of components.

13 The first component is, of course, whether you
14 have access. And so a lot of what we're solving
15 for, through these broadband grant programs, is
16 making sure that individuals have access to
17 broadband. And the Federal Communications
18 Commission has defined "broadband" as service that
19 is 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits
20 per second upload.

21 Now, many of you who are enjoying Internet
22 service at home would probably question whether
23 that's the right speed. And if you look to some of
24 the more recent guidance and some of the more
25 recent investment commitments through some of the

1 one-time funds coming from the federal government,
2 and even for our State grant program here in South
3 Carolina, I think that we're looking more towards
4 speeds that are 100 megabits per second download
5 and 10 megabits per second upload, in order to
6 ensure the full access to services like telehealth
7 or full access to opportunities to run a business.

8 So we first have the access portion of the
9 digital divide.

10 The second component of the digital divide is
11 affordability. Just because you can bring it to my
12 home doesn't mean I can really access it and I can
13 really enjoy the service. And so, when we talked
14 about our Spectrum Internet Assist Program and the
15 Affordable Connectivity Program through the Federal
16 Communications Commission, those types of programs
17 help solve for the affordability component of the
18 digital divide. And in many ways, the
19 affordability component is actually larger than the
20 access component, but both portions of the
21 challenge need to be solved for.

22 And then, lastly, the third component of the
23 digital divide that we're also trying to help solve
24 for is digital literacy. So we have, you know,
25 people who have access, who have solutions for

1 affordability, but maybe cannot understand or don't
2 have the educational background or the tools or the
3 training in order to make the most out of that
4 connectivity. As much as we believe that everybody
5 wants our gigabit service and it's all about our
6 gigabit service, it's really not about that; it's
7 really about access to education, access to
8 healthcare.

9 So this digital literacy component is a
10 component where we work with third parties, or
11 third-party organizations on their own try to reach
12 into communities and find these individuals who may
13 not understand the full scope of the value the
14 connectivity services can bring for them and their
15 families. And so they do digital literacy
16 training. Some of them also offer connected
17 devices, so that these families have access to
18 tools, to allow them to connect to the Internet, to
19 use that access in a way that's meaningful and
20 productive for their families.

21 So when we talk about the digital divide,
22 we're talking about all three of those challenges
23 and how they, you know, collectively leave people
24 disenfranchised.

25 And thank you for that question, Commissioner,

1 because it is – you know, it is a presumptive
2 situation that we made it, in putting the slides
3 together, and I’m glad you gave us a chance to
4 share that.

5 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** Well, and when I
6 mentioned rural or rural areas, you know, I believe
7 I was reared in one, but I didn’t know it at the
8 time. But being a Clemson man and coming to
9 Columbia, Clemson is considered rural to a lot of
10 USC folks, so I’m not real sure whether we are or
11 are not. But just kind of trying to better
12 understand what that is. Thank you.

13 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** My family is
14 from Blakely, Georgia, Early County. So believe
15 me, I know about living in rural areas. And
16 another interesting perspective when we are looking
17 at access concerns, more than 20 percent of the
18 people who don’t have access are in rural areas.
19 And, you know, it varies by state, and that number
20 grows, but we also have some people who are in
21 pockets in areas that are not rural, but are – you
22 know, in suburbs that aren’t really heavily densely
23 populated. So when we speak a lot, we speak to
24 both terms. We use both the term “rural” and the
25 term “unserved.” The term “unserved” is a term we

1 use more broadly, regardless of whether you're
2 specifically in a geographically rural area or in
3 maybe just an area that's just not densely
4 populated but is not specifically rural. But we
5 use "unserved" to mean anybody, wherever you are,
6 that doesn't have access to 25/3.

7 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** And, Marva, I can add to
8 Commissioner Caston's comments and relate to them,
9 because, Commissioner, I grew up down a dirt road
10 in rural Horry County, so I know exactly of what
11 you speak. I'm very familiar with Chester County,
12 too. And so, when you're down a dirt road and
13 you're one of a few families living down there,
14 then obviously the density of population means
15 you're going to be the last to get
16 telecommunications service, Plain Old Telephone
17 Service. I remember having a party line. So those
18 sorts of things exist. And it's – you deal with it
19 at every area of utility that you – utilities that
20 you regulate. Water and sewer, if you're the last
21 person on the line, extending that line gets to be
22 very expensive.

23 But what has happened today is everybody
24 realizes that broadband is absolutely not a luxury
25 but is essential to people being able to compete.

1 That person growing up in Chester County or Horry
2 County, or wherever they may be, in every nook and
3 cranny of this State, the State and the federal
4 government has decided that those folks need those
5 equal opportunities to those resources. And that's
6 what bridging that digital divide is all about.

7 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Absolutely.
8 And, again, thank you for your question,
9 Commissioner.

10 And just to speak a little bit more about our
11 efforts to bridge the digital divide, I think we
12 wanted to talk about how we support adoption-
13 related initiatives. And for –

14 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Ms. Johnson?

15 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** I'm sorry.

16 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Mr. Chairman? I grew up
17 in Clio, so – maybe I'm backing up, and maybe it's
18 something you're going to get to. But I think Mr.
19 Chowaniec mentioned infrastructure, and I'm very
20 curious. Some things I've read somewhere or just
21 some thoughts I've had about – with the highway
22 construction, is this something that you'll be able
23 to run along with, or will there be buried lines,
24 or what sort of plans those are.

25 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** I'm going to get

1 into that in –

2 COMMISSIONER POWERS: Okay.

3 MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]: – just a couple
4 of slides, Commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER POWERS: That's great. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]: If that's okay.

8 MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]: Yeah. He's even
9 going to talk about Florence County, maybe one you
10 care about.

11 COMMISSIONER POWERS: Marlboro.

12 MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]: It's an
13 excellent question. It's perfectly in line with
14 infrastructure.

15 MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]: Yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER POWERS: Thank you.

17 MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]: Fantastic.

18 [Reference: Presentation Slide 10]

19 And so, coming to bring this back to the
20 adoption initiatives, we've got – in addition to
21 our Spectrum Internet Assist Program, we've also
22 got a program called the Spectrum Digital Education
23 Grants, and that program is really designed to help
24 with the digital-literacy component.

25 As part of a seven – of a five-year commitment

1 to help with the digital-literacy concerns, Charter
2 has spent over seven – or, invested over \$7 million
3 in these programs, and we've awarded a million
4 digital education grants to 49 nonprofits across
5 the country. Right here in South Carolina, we've
6 invested \$35,000 in a partnership with the Palmetto
7 Care Connections to advance digital-literacy goals,
8 and \$12,000 in the communities and schools in South
9 Carolina, again, to advance digital-literacy goals.

10 [Reference: Presentation Slide 11]

11 And then, one program we're very excited
12 about, and this will be an important component as
13 we move forward with some of our more rural builds,
14 is our Spectrum Community Assist. This is a new
15 program that was launched at the end of last year.
16 And with our Spectrum Community Assist Program,
17 we'll be helping communities that may be
18 underserved in terms of opportunity, as we extend
19 broadband in these areas, or with our existing
20 broadband networks in these areas. We're going to
21 be working with a community center in these
22 designated locations. We'll be doing some job-
23 skills training; we'll be making physical
24 improvements to the community center, itself; we'll
25 be maintaining broadband connectivity for those

1 facilities; and then we'll also make in-kind
2 contributions. And the expectation is that,
3 through these programs and through these
4 partnerships, not only will we extend digital
5 literacy, we will also extend the true value of
6 this connectivity. We will help people get jobs;
7 we will help people change their economic
8 situation; we'll help improve some of the
9 educational outcomes in these areas.

10 And so we're looking to choose 100 communities
11 across the country for our – actually, for the next
12 three to five years, as we look to deploy this, and
13 then there will also be a number of communities
14 that we may add in, as we look to work on some
15 projects, like we had talked about doing for Saluda
16 County here in South Carolina. So that's a program
17 that we're going to be leaning in on, in 2022 and
18 forward.

19 [Reference: Presentation Slides 12-13]

20 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** So, Commissioner
21 Powers, this is the slide that I was referring to,
22 and this is kind of an overview of where we are in
23 South Carolina in terms of closing the digital
24 divide.

25 When Marva talked about the three aspects of

1 the digital divide, Commissioner Caston, it was
2 basically access, which is the infrastructure
3 piece; affordability, which is the other A; and
4 then adoption, which is kind of the digital
5 literacy. This piece is the access piece, the
6 infrastructure piece, Commissioner Powers, that you
7 were asking about.

8 We actually were the recipient of a large
9 federal grant to move into much lower-density areas
10 or rural areas, last year – the Rural Digital
11 Opportunity Fund. And it was \$112 million of FCC
12 subsidy money for us to move into thousands of
13 rural census blocks in South Carolina. It's a
14 multi-year project.

15 The way that the South Carolina slide is
16 presented to you today, it shows to you in dark
17 blue our existing network; and then, in the green,
18 it shows the census blocks that are wholly
19 unserved, that we committed to build to with the
20 federal subsidy. And the bigger portion of that
21 was actually a private investment from Charter.
22 The federal subsidy was the smaller piece. Our
23 investment from Charter is a much larger piece on
24 those.

25 But when it comes to actually getting there,

1 which I think was the heart of your question, you
2 can really only get fiber to a home one of two
3 ways. We're not doing it through the air, we're
4 not doing it wirelessly – which is another option –
5 or through a satellite; we're actually delivering a
6 fiber-optic cable, which is the gold standard of
7 delivering broadband, because it provides gigabit
8 service to homes, which is future-proof. It's a
9 30-year technology. It's not something that's
10 going to be overrun. We want to get that fiber
11 there.

12 You can do it underground through the existing
13 rights-of-way, like the highway transportation
14 system in some cases. You can bury it underground
15 or you can connect to the existing infrastructure
16 of utility poles. Utility poles were put in place
17 for, of course, the telecommunications system, but
18 that's where we can quickly and rapidly deploy our
19 fiber-optics on a very fast basis. It's a faster
20 way to go than having to dig through rock and dig
21 through gas lines and everything else.

22 So those are the two ways. But when you talk
23 about the highway system, most of those utility
24 poles run along the highways, of course, and as you
25 expand roads probably our utility owners are going

1 to expand the utility pole system, as well, so...

2 In terms of the current network, we are
3 actually, in a multi-year basis, going to be going,
4 again, to reinforce the green, these wholly
5 unserved census blocks, over a multiyear project
6 with the subsidy we have from the federal
7 government. So we look forward to doing that, and
8 we'll expand a little bit more on the next slide,
9 in terms of how we're planning on doing that.

10 [Reference: Presentation Slide 14]

11 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** We have a
12 historical opportunity that we didn't anticipate,
13 even, when we won the Rural Digital Opportunity
14 Fund reverse auction over a year ago. We now are
15 looking, on top of the investment that the Federal
16 Communications Commission has committed in
17 extending broadband to wholly unserved census
18 blocks, there's now multi-- tens of billions of
19 dollars available that many of our states are also
20 using to further extend broadband in unserved
21 areas.

22 And so, for the State of South Carolina, not
23 that all of this money is necessarily being
24 allocated for broadband -- some portion of it will
25 be in -- we're using these numbers to demonstrate

1 sort of what the universe of potential is. For
2 South Carolina, that's nearly \$2½ million worth of
3 ARPA money, the American Rescue Plan money, that's
4 available here, and then another billion dollars
5 was given to the counties directly under the
6 American Rescue Plan, and then some of the
7 municipalities also received funding that totals
8 about \$191 million in funding. All of these funds
9 not specifically for broadband deployment, but
10 still funds that are available, some portion of
11 which could be used to service broadband.

12 And, you know, I was introduced earlier as the
13 Group Vice President for the Southeast Region, so
14 when I look across the region, my nine-state region
15 starts with Maryland and it's basically the
16 Southeast, the nine states that make up the
17 Southeast, that's, you know, over \$37 billion in
18 federal funding at the state level and another \$15
19 billion at the local or county level and then
20 another \$5 billion in the local municipalities. So
21 we really do have a historical opportunity to take
22 some of these funds and use them in a way that
23 extends that full broadband access and connectivity
24 to every citizen in South Carolina.

25 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Ms. Johnson, if I may.

1 If you could go back to that slide – the money
2 slide, if you will.

3 MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]: [Indicating.]

4 [Reference: Presentation Slide 14]

5 CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS: Is there any way for
6 you to give us a picture, paint a picture, of what
7 we should expect to see in a few years, in terms of
8 broadband in rural areas or underserved areas
9 across the State, based on all the money that's
10 available? Because I've been hearing about all the
11 money that's available for broadband, and so I'm
12 just curious to know what should I expect to see in
13 three to five years, after this money has been used
14 to increase access to broadband?

15 MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]: All right. I
16 can certainly share with you, from Charter's
17 perspective, what we think the opportunity is. And
18 we have a slide a little bit later that talks
19 specifically about some of the funds we believe may
20 be allocated in South Carolina, and it's about \$400
21 million that we're looking at right now.

22 There are estimates that say that it might
23 take as much as \$2 billion to build out full access
24 to all of the remaining homes. However, for
25 Charter's perspective, what it would look like at

1 the end of five to six years is, really, full
2 access, like you have utility access for your
3 electric service at most locations. The
4 expectation is not by one single technology but by
5 a combination of technologies, every address should
6 be serviceable.

7 So as we think about extending fiber and as
8 has been mentioned, fiber is the gold standard,
9 because it is going to give you some not just
10 resiliency in terms of the quality of the service,
11 but, you know, we are also looking at a network
12 that's going to be pretty much future-proof, but
13 the truth is that fiber is not going to be able to
14 get to every location. So the fact that SpaceX is
15 also extending their network through satellite
16 should – you know, when you've combined satellite-
17 Internet-service, fixed-wireless-service, and
18 wired-fiber-to-the-home networks, we really should
19 have ubiquitous access within the next, you know,
20 five to six years, for South Carolina.

21 That's a Charter's perspective, but we can
22 certainly talk a little bit more about what that
23 investment would have to look like for that math to
24 come true.

25 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Thank you.

1 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** If I may, I wanted to
2 make sure I understood that, too. You're saying
3 fiber-optic, and I think Mr. Breazeale said was the
4 gold standard. And you just said satellite,
5 potentially satellite, which kind of sounds like a
6 satellite phone to me. Did you say anything about
7 like cellular tower or like 5G or – I may have
8 missed that, or maybe you did, or didn't. I wasn't
9 sure.

10 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** You didn't miss
11 it. I actually – we, as has been noted earlier,
12 and as Mike noted, we're actually working to
13 provide wireless service, even, ourselves. And we
14 do partner with Verizon on our MVNO at this point
15 in our network evolution. But Charter, as a cable
16 operator, as a broadband service provider, is also
17 extending 5G network technology, as well, and we
18 have a strong appreciation for the value of that
19 wireless technology and we do believe it's
20 essential to our ability to best serve our
21 customers. However, the truth is is that that
22 wireless service has to come back for backhaul to a
23 wired network. So as we make investments, we
24 believe that our wireless network will be strong
25 because of the wired fiber network that's going to

1 be backhauling that traffic and enabling those
2 wireless speeds.

3 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** So, if I'm understanding
4 you correctly, you're saying that it would be not
5 just one thing but, I guess, to fully cover the
6 State would require multiple forms, whether that's
7 satellite, whether that's fiber-optic, whether that
8 is cellular. And I'm assuming when you said that
9 back – backfeed, or whatever –

10 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Backhaul, yeah.

11 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** – that just goes back to
12 somewhere where you've got fiber-optic, or
13 whatever.

14 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Exactly.

15 **MR. MICHAEL CHOWANIEC [CHARTER]:** And,
16 Commissioner, if I may, I think your perspective on
17 this is absolutely right. It's going to
18 ultimately – we're here before you as, obviously, a
19 major service provider and a major investor in the
20 State, but there will be others, right? And those
21 others will, in fact, do deployment that looks
22 similar to ours in terms of wireline deployment.
23 But as you suggested, the circumstances in these
24 areas, particularly, can be challenging, right?
25 The economics and the circumstances in terms of

1 where you may have other utility network to
2 piggyback off of, right, create obstacles. And so
3 the satellite component and the wireless component
4 generally provided by others is going to have to be
5 part of the solution, right, because you're not
6 going to get there exclusively on the basis of
7 wireline service, because the math would
8 potentially be cost-prohibitive. And in some
9 cases, the infrastructure isn't set up in such a
10 way that you could extend wireline to certain
11 areas, even if you wanted to pay almost any price.

12 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** Uh-huh. Okay.

13 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Chairman Williams,
14 I'd like to piggyback on your question.

15 Ms. Johnson, when you talked about the five-
16 to-six-year window, was that for Charter's
17 investment? Or was that what you – was that
18 related to those other providers that won RDOF
19 monies, as well?

20 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** This is really
21 just Marva's – yeah – Marva's best guess, because
22 at the end of the day it really depends on how fast
23 we can go. And that is dependent upon how much
24 incremental investment the State is willing to
25 make, the federal government is putting in, and

1 then how much additional private-sector capital
2 will come to bear.

3 If you look at the Rural Digital Opportunity
4 Fund, the service providers that were awarded the
5 locations to build out in that reverse auction have
6 six years to build to these areas that are wholly
7 unserved, census blocks with no service.

8 Ben will talk a little later about some of the
9 things that we're doing in order to make sure that,
10 as we build and anchor our networks in these areas
11 that are wholly unserved, we optimize the
12 investment we've made to try to add more locations
13 to these builds. And we'll talk about Florence
14 County, how we're working with some of the local
15 leaders to say, "We're going to be building in this
16 area. We'd like to extend service throughout your
17 county as fast as we can get there."

18 We could either partner with the county
19 themselves or work with the State through the State
20 grant program, so that we can try to get as close
21 to universal access or full access in each of these
22 counties as we can, as fast as we can, but a lot of
23 it is going to be dependent on the tolerance for
24 investment and, as Mr. Chowanec noted, how quickly
25 we can extend the plant. It's been noted earlier

1 the fastest way for us to get our network using the
2 technology that Charter uses in our network
3 topography, is to attach to utility poles and to
4 run our service aurally. You know, if we have
5 good, easy access to utility poles, the faster we
6 can go. Going underground is great. It's a great
7 solution, but we can't always go underground. It's
8 not, you know, a solution that works in every
9 scenario, but it takes longer. So it really is
10 contingent upon how much we're willing to invest
11 and continue to invest to lean in on the problem.

12 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Ms. Johnson, I didn't
13 mean to turn your seat into the hot seat, so this
14 question is for the entire panel or for you if you
15 want it. I understand there's six years for the
16 build-out. Is there options to walk away? Since
17 this is sort of new and some of the companies are
18 going into unserved areas or areas with no access –
19 unserved, as opposed to underserved – what if a
20 company finds that this was a whole lot harder than
21 we thought it would be? What happens then, if they
22 decide that they don't want to pursue that course
23 of action anymore?

24 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Yeah, I'm going
25 to take the hot seat, but I'll share it with Mr.

1 Chowaniec. The best time for a company to walk
2 away from a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund
3 commitment would have been before – is actually
4 before your long form is approved.

5 So one of the things that we had to do after
6 winning the awards was submit a long form, which
7 has much more substantial information about our
8 plans to build out. And there were penalties that
9 you would suffer before your long form is approved,
10 but after your long form is approved those
11 penalties escalate. So, you could end up paying
12 back any monies you receive plus a penalty of up to
13 like 85 percent of what the award was.

14 So, could a company walk away? Probably.
15 Would it be financially advised? It probably
16 wouldn't be. I'm sure it would depend on the
17 situation.

18 For Charter, we are looking at this as a
19 commitment we plan to fulfill, and we tried to make
20 sure of it when we got to the point where our long
21 form was being considered. We are ready to execute
22 on the remaining obligations.

23 **MR. MICHAEL CHOWANIEC [CHARTER]:** The only
24 thing – everything Marva said is true. The only
25 thing I would add, you know, to that is we filed a

1 couple of supplemental, you know, filings with your
2 agency over the last few months because we did a
3 more careful review of our RDOF commitments and
4 there were certain years where, based on just a
5 snapshot in time, you know, the FCC, let's say, was
6 identifying buildings that didn't exist, right? Or
7 they were identifying areas as unserved that were,
8 in fact, served, right? So we took that list very
9 seriously and we scrubbed it with the
10 understanding, as Marva said, that this was a real
11 commitment. And from your perspective – and I've
12 been there at one point in my life, you know, on
13 the public-sector side – the penalties are real and
14 they are intentionally severe, right, because the
15 expectation was that when you, as a service
16 provider, commit to this, you know, that you're
17 honoring that commitment, right? So I would – dare
18 I say, you know, they're punitive is, I guess – and
19 I think rightfully so, right? The expectation
20 should be that, if a company, you know, made the
21 commitment and potentially others were eligible,
22 right, to make the commitment and were not awarded
23 the funds, that, you know, we and others will honor
24 that commitment.

25 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Thank you.

1 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Thank you.

2 And I'm going to go back to the PowerPoint,
3 but I do appreciate the questions, and I meant to
4 say it at the opening. We love to have questions
5 throughout the presentation, but I don't have to
6 say that to you-all, so thank you.

7 [Reference: Presentation Slide 15]

8 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** So that brings right into –
9 the segue goes into what has the South Carolina
10 General Assembly done to promote broadband
11 distribution throughout the State to bridge the
12 digital divide. And about a year and a half ago,
13 as you are aware, the General Assembly – and it was
14 immediately signed by the Governor – passed South
15 Carolina's Broadband Accessibility Act of 2020.
16 I'll refer it to as the BBA from time to time.

17 And on this slide you have in front of you
18 now, in the lower left-hand corner, is a quote from
19 Governor McMaster, and I think it sums up the
20 public policy of the State. "Broadband
21 connectivity is a powerful catalyst for economic
22 and social advancement. It is no longer a luxury –
23 it is a necessity, critical to ensuring a level
24 playing field for those in rural areas."

25 So the goal is, to someone growing up in

1 Chester in a rural area, or Horry County, or Clio,
2 in rural areas, that they will have equal access to
3 broadband infrastructure as those folks growing up
4 in Columbia, Lexington, Spartanburg, Greenville,
5 Charleston, some of the more populated centers of
6 the State that really have high-speed Internet
7 access available to them.

8 The legislative objectives are on the left-
9 hand side. I think it's important to note that the
10 General Assembly noted, as its objectives, to
11 promote the efficient deployment of broadband
12 throughout the State. And, then, the BBA continues
13 to go on and says that one of our objectives is
14 facilitating access to broadband services in
15 unserved areas.

16 And that is the focus, Chairman Williams,
17 without any question. That's what the General
18 Assembly's objectives were.

19 And so how we're – it's always means and
20 methods. So what is the methods by which the
21 General Assembly says, "We're going to try to
22 accomplish this," or, "We're going to incentivize
23 service providers to be able to do it"? You've
24 talked about – you've heard others say here, this
25 morning, about the gold standard is the

1 connectivity of being able to use fiber-optic
2 cable, to – and the reason fiber-optic, it's been
3 around for a little while, but fiber-optic, or
4 glass leads inside the cables, and these have the
5 capacity to transmit great amounts of data. And we
6 are in a data-driven world at this point.
7 Businesses are constantly capturing data. You hear
8 all kinds of information dealing with the ability
9 to transmit data.

10 So that's what you need to do, is be able to
11 use fiber-optic cable. And even if you have a
12 wireless connection at some point, you're going to
13 have to come back to backhaul; you're going to
14 have – fiber-optic connection, in this day and age,
15 is going to be a great part of that distribution of
16 those communications signals.

17 So how are we going to do it? We can't just
18 go out and start laying wire in the middle of a
19 roadway. Obviously, you've got to coordinate with
20 government officials to do that. And you can't get
21 to the young man in Chester that might be on the
22 end of a line because he's not on an interstate
23 highway and could be still down a dirt road at this
24 point in time. Hopefully not. At least that road
25 I grew up on has been paved at some point in time.

1 They waited until after I left, Commissioner,
2 before they paved it, but my 93-year-old mom still
3 lives down that road and she's glad to have that
4 road paved today, and I'm glad for her.

5 So what are we going to do and what are the
6 needs? Well, we need nondiscriminatory access to
7 the existing rights-of-way. The General Assembly
8 made the determination that these rights-of-way
9 have been developed, in many cases, with federal
10 supporting funds, low-cost loans, any number of
11 ways. Could be aerial. In most of the cases, it
12 will be aerial. And as you heard Marva talk about,
13 aerial is less expensive; it's more widely
14 available. And, yes, you can put it underground;
15 it costs more, takes longer, but that's an option.
16 But not – it's going to delay the implementation
17 and distribution if you're underground, and it's
18 going to be more expensive if that's the way. So
19 you've got to have nondiscriminatory access to
20 existing poles and rights-of-way. Gotta have the
21 rights-of-way. You can't just start laying cable
22 across someone's private property. Just and
23 reasonable rates, terms, and conditions. To be
24 able to do that, what are you going to have to pay
25 for the right to attach to existing pole owners'

1 rights-of-way on their existing poles? So that's
2 got to be just and reasonable rates. And,
3 obviously, the Public Service Commission has been
4 involved with developing rates and approving rates
5 and terms and conditions, and you are given
6 responsibilities in connection with the Broadband
7 Accessibility Act in that regard, as well, if
8 there's a dispute about those.

9 How quickly can you do it? What sort of
10 timelines? Can people intentionally try to delay
11 the distribution for one reason or another? The
12 General Assembly adopted the FCC make-ready
13 timelines and requirements. They did that by
14 incorporating by reference, Commissioner Williams
15 and Vice Chair Belser and Mr. Powers, they
16 incorporated by reference FCC regulations that set
17 out those timelines. Those timelines had been
18 widely used for a period of time; they'd been
19 approved; they're uniform; they're widely known.
20 So we want to get distribution done quickly, so
21 we're going to adopt these make-ready timelines.

22 And "made-ready" is a major part of the issue.
23 So, you approach a pole owner and say, "I need to
24 attach to your poles that exist there today," and
25 obviously the pole owner has obligations and

1 requirements, and they want to make sure that the
2 attachments are being able to be done in a safe
3 way, that there's capacity on those existing lines.
4 Sometimes there's insufficient capacity and your
5 make-ready refers to being able to say, "I will
6 make these poles ready to receive my digital
7 attachment." And the terms and conditions of that
8 will be important things that can either delay or
9 facilitate the speed at which it will move forward.

10 Uniform pole standards. Everybody is focused
11 on the General Assembly adopted as a reasonable
12 standard the National Electric Safety Code. And so
13 there will be questions, if you comply with
14 standards of the National Electric Safety Code, is
15 that good enough? And there will be, perhaps,
16 varying points of view on that, but we believe that
17 the National Electric Safety Code is the standard.

18 And then your involvement in that process, if
19 agreements can't be reached in the field, where
20 direct negotiations are ongoing or should occur,
21 then if there are disputes for access, then this
22 Commission has the power to resolve those disputes.

23 And I'll give you just a little more detail.
24 So, Marva, if we'll go to this next slide –

25 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Mr. –

1 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** May –

2 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** – Chairman?

3 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** – I stop you just one
4 second?

5 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** Sure.

6 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** If I may, Chair? The
7 pole – the rapid pole attachment, which I think I
8 understand that, you can do it quicker. You know,
9 the thing with water and wastewater, we didn't have
10 a choice, although we did find some of the fiber-
11 optic cables pretty expensive to fix those. That
12 said, I know through the course of time there's
13 been debate back and forth about overhead, whether
14 it's communication, electric lines, you know,
15 should they be underground? Some people say,
16 "Well, they're ugly. We ought to put them
17 underground," and others say, "Well, storms, you
18 know, they're going to be knocked out. It's better
19 to do that." Is that any consideration in this
20 process?

21 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** Well, I would think that all
22 of those things are worthy of consideration,
23 Commissioner, without any question. Like with
24 everything, time is critical. The faster you can
25 make the distribution of the new infrastructure,

1 the better.

2 Cost, regardless of the fact that the federal
3 government and states, to some degree, have devoted
4 funds for the purpose of improving broadband
5 infrastructure, distributing fiber-optics,
6 nevertheless the supply of money, I've always found
7 in my life that it's always limited. So funds are
8 limited, as well.

9 So, the question becomes how much would it
10 cost to go underground versus using existing right-
11 of-way to attach it to existing poles, and do you
12 have the funds to make the choice? So, but those
13 things will certainly be considered and you might
14 have multiple applications. You might have
15 applications where it runs aboveground and on poles
16 for some part of a right-of-way, and then runs
17 underground through other parts of the rights-of-
18 way. But, obviously, that deployment in the field
19 will be something that the engineers will look at
20 very carefully as to what is the most prudent and
21 safe installation method that may be available,
22 given the right-of-way and the limitations that
23 might exist there.

24 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** And, Mitch, I
25 can — Commissioner, I can weigh in, as well. I

1 hope I'm not redundant, but your question is a
2 perfect one. The issues that you-all have to weigh
3 when it comes to broadband deployment into rural
4 areas are issues of safety in hurricanes, which is
5 much better underground, obviously; issues of
6 beautification, which is the unsightliness in
7 neighborhoods. The rule that we've heard from the
8 Legislature and from the Office of Regulatory
9 Staff, as well, the Broadband Office, is speed is
10 the number one consideration that we heard from the
11 Legislature, and that is because of the great cost
12 of a six-year-old not having broadband for an
13 additional year but, by far, you know, underground
14 is a great way to go. It takes longer to do that,
15 because of the obvious reasons, based on your
16 experience as well, obviously.

17 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Commissioner Powers?

18 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Mr. Willoughby, obviously, you've looked at
20 this closer than I have at this point. You start
21 talking about pole disputes. I'm assuming that's
22 something that our hearing officers can decide, or
23 is that something that would be good for mediation
24 or arbitration, or how do you see that playing out?

25 **MR. WILLOUGHBY:** Well, all of those

1 mechanisms – in fact, if we'll go to the second
2 slide that we have up here.

3 [Reference: Presentation Slide 16]

4 Yes, right here. All of those mechanisms are
5 available, Commissioner Powers. There are two
6 methods. Rapid pole attachment dispute resolution,
7 so the Act provides two methods for dispute
8 resolution within it. And one method is to come
9 directly to the Commission. You know, if you've
10 negotiated with a party, you have to notify an
11 owner of poles that we need access to your poles,
12 and you send a writing to them saying, "I want
13 access to your poles," and you have to negotiate
14 with them for a period of time, but if you reach an
15 impasse where you're unable to agree to a contract,
16 then you're able to come to the Commission. And
17 there are fairly – not "fairly." There are
18 statutory deadlines by which the Commission must
19 receive the petition to resolve the dispute and
20 hear that dispute, go through the discovery process
21 and have a hearing.

22 And a hearing officer might be able to do some
23 of the normal things that a hearing officer does,
24 dealing with discovery issues and the like, but
25 ultimately the dispute resolution lies with the

1 Commission, and so the Commission would have to
2 hear the case and make a ruling and issue an order
3 within the statutory deadlines.

4 There's also a mechanism whereby you can go to
5 ORS or you can submit an issue to ORS, and ORS can
6 attempt to mediate that to any disputes, and there
7 is a process to go through that. But at the end of
8 that day, if the mediation still believes leaves
9 the parties with different points of view and
10 they're unable to resolve their issues, then the
11 Commission ultimately is the one that you come to
12 to resolve the dispute.

13 So there are two avenues. One comes directly
14 to the Commission, one employs the mediation
15 services and capabilities, and ORS does some other
16 things in that process that's defined by the
17 statute, as well.

18 So the General Assembly made it clear, as I
19 pointed out earlier, that they want – one of the
20 things is efficiency, and they want it to get to
21 unserved areas as quick as possible.

22 And I might say to Commissioner Caston, my 93-
23 year-old mother that lives, still, down that same
24 road that I grew up on, if her children were still
25 living with her – and, of course, they are not –

1 but if they were still living with her, she would
2 want those services for their educational benefits,
3 as every mother in those communities want, as
4 quickly as they can get it. And, of course, I live
5 in a community in Northeast Columbia, and all of
6 the utilities are underground, and they have been
7 for years, and that's nice. You don't have the
8 aerial appearance. But out where my mother lives
9 in that rural area, all of those utilities are
10 aboveground. So it's a different set of
11 circumstances, and do keep in mind the focus has
12 been let's get service to those unserved areas that
13 do not have the capability and service available to
14 them today. And as Marva pointed out, there are
15 pockets, even within our more urban areas, that
16 still are part of the digital divide, and they need
17 service, as well.

18 But the key here today and what the General
19 Assembly did, dealt with, is trying to make sure
20 that the unserved areas are quickly served. As the
21 Governor said, it is no longer – it's not a luxury;
22 it's a necessity, to ensure a level playing field
23 for those in rural areas. The goal is to have
24 every child, every person that needs telemedicine,
25 educational opportunities, business opportunities,

1 that we are able to develop every nook and cranny
2 of the great State that we all love and serve. And
3 that's one of the goals that the General Assembly
4 had for broadband deployment.

5 And I'll go back to this slide very quickly,
6 and we'll conclude. Uniform standards, National
7 Electric Safety Code. Not a hodgepodge where
8 someone has a standard over here, and another
9 standard over here. National Electric Safety Code.
10 A lot of these pole owners are electric providers,
11 so they wanted to make sure that there was safety,
12 that make-ready standards were there, and then the
13 FCC timelines where the goals of "Let's be able to
14 do it quick and here's the tool we're going to use.
15 It's already available to us. Let's adopt those
16 tools in terms of timelines, and move forward with
17 that."

18 And as you see on this slide, the Act is
19 designed with efficiency and rapidity of broadband
20 deployment in mind. That is the goal underpinning
21 this Act.

22 I'll turn it back to Marva.

23 [Reference: Presentation Slide 17]

24 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Thank you,
25 Mitch.

1 And thank you, again, Commissioner Caston, for
2 that question, because – and I just wanted to
3 underscore a point that both Ben and Mr. Willoughby
4 made, in that when we look at going underground, it
5 is not just, you know, more expensive, but most
6 importantly, if our goal is to be efficient and get
7 out rapidly, it takes more time. And so as we look
8 to deploy our network, we're doing both. We're
9 going aerial, we're going underground. But we're
10 trying to get service out as fast as possible, is
11 really what is underscoring our efforts. And so as
12 we also think about the efficiency portion of it,
13 if it costs more to actually go in and trench,
14 and – you can't actually go underground everywhere.
15 The geography has, you know, some limitations. We
16 run into problems with railroad crossings and other
17 things like that. But just assuming the geography
18 is conducive to undergrounding, if it costs more
19 and we're looking at how do we get service out – do
20 we finish in five years, do we finish in seven
21 years, do we finish in ten years with our goal of
22 having service to everyone, there's a finite amount
23 of money. So how fast can we build is number one.
24 And then how far can we stretch the money is number
25 two.

1 And when we look at this slide, which is our
2 assessment – or, really, it's really a comparison
3 of what investments are being made across my
4 region, which is the Southeast region. South
5 Carolina is very well positioned. On top of the
6 CARES Act projects and other investments the State
7 has made in deploying broadband, I think we're
8 looking now at the opportunity, perhaps, for as
9 much as \$400 million to be invested, to get to the
10 remaining 450,000 locations.

11 You can see how that investment compares to
12 what some of the other states are investing. We,
13 of course, know the math, that \$400 million is not
14 going to get us all 450,000 served, but it's going
15 to make good progress. And if you looked at some
16 of the investments on top of these efforts,
17 including the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, then
18 we start to put together a package that allows for
19 this capital to go as far as we possibly can and
20 reach as many homes as possible.

21 **COMMISSIONER THOMAS:** Mr. Chairman.

22 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Commissioner Thomas.

23 **COMMISSIONER THOMAS:** Thank you.

24 So I assume, since we're talking "rural," that
25 you're going to be dealing with a lot of the

1 electric co-ops and relationships with the co-ops
2 in order to be able to get these pole attachments.
3 So, I would assume that what you're trying to do is
4 come up with an agreement, kind of a high-level
5 agreement, with the co-op for their entire area,
6 and it's not like neighborhood by neighborhood or
7 something like that. And, so, I guess I'm just
8 wondering how is that going? I don't remember how
9 many co-ops there are in South Carolina. It's a
10 pretty good number, I think. Maybe 20 or 25. And
11 are you trying to get an agreement with all of
12 those that may impact your area, and are you having
13 good progress with that? What's going on with
14 that?

15 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir,
16 Commissioner. There are 20, and some of them have
17 entered into the broadband business, some of them
18 have not. So that's two different categories,
19 probably, of, you know, entities that we need to
20 deal with. But it's going well. The areas that
21 we've started deploying service, in particular, we
22 have some really good relationships with
23 particularly the co-ops in the Pee Dee region, for
24 instance. Those relationships are going really
25 well. I sat down personally with two of the CEOs

1 in that region, and they were very forthright.
2 They're not in the broadband business there, so
3 that helped, because they didn't have any
4 additional business competing, you know, with the
5 poles that they were going to give us access to.
6 So that was very helpful. But those are going very
7 well.

8 I think that Mitch was talking about the
9 National Electric Safety Code standards. I think a
10 universal standard from the Broadband Accessibility
11 Act is extremely helpful. They are following those
12 standards, as far as our construction folks in the
13 field are telling us. They're approving pole
14 permits very rapidly, which helps us out a lot,
15 even better than some of the FCC standards that
16 were incorporated into the Act. And, obviously, if
17 there's a mile of fiber, there's 18 poles in that
18 mile of fiber. Every one of those poles has to
19 have approval from that pole owner for safety
20 purposes, to make sure that we get a permit back.
21 If they're processing 25 poles a week, that's a
22 little tough. If they're processing 50 or 75 poles
23 a week, that's better. Because we've got to get
24 tens and fifties and hundred miles of fiber, based
25 on our commitment, lined up, so we can get that

1 bucket truck you saw in the picture and just knock
2 them out. If we have all the permits, we can knock
3 them all out, kind of in a row, and go miles per
4 day rather than feet per day.

5 So that's an important relationship, but
6 it's – the ones that we're working with right now
7 are going well, and there's others that maybe Mike
8 wants to talk about, or Marva, that maybe we don't
9 have the same working relationships now, but we are
10 absolutely working to have that with all of them.

11 I don't know if there's any other –

12 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** We can talk
13 about it more as we go through.

14 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** Okay. I hope
15 that answers your question.

16 **COMMISSIONER THOMAS:** Very good. Thank you.

17 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir.

18 **COMMISSIONER THOMAS:** I appreciate it.

19 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Mr. Chairman?

20 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Commissioner Powers.

21 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** And I'll try to hush in
22 a minute. I noticed that, you know, growing up in
23 Marlboro County, Marlboro-Dillon area, that a lot
24 of, on your map, is green for those areas. So, I
25 assume, when you say the Pee Dee co-ops, you're

1 dealing with those co-ops in Marlboro, Dillon, up
2 in at area?

3 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir. Pee
4 Dee Electric and Santee Electric were the two I was
5 referring to, that I sat down directly with, and
6 they were very forthright. We had very good
7 meetings, and I have no reason to think that we're
8 not going to work great together to get what we
9 have to get done down there.

10 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Years ago, having worked
11 with the development for a rural county, I guess
12 now it goes without saying, if you don't have
13 broadband, you're going to have a hard time
14 attracting industry and other things with your
15 schools and, of course, telehealth, I think you
16 mentioned, as well.

17 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir.

18 **COMMISSIONER POWERS:** Thank you.

19 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Uh-huh.

20 This next slide is picking up a little bit on
21 your questions there.

22 [Reference: Presentation Slides 18-19]

23 It goes – maybe the – yeah, it goes into all
24 of the work that has to go into this, and I kind of
25 covered it when I was answering your question,

1 Commissioner Thomas. But most of the work, even
2 under the best-case scenario in an aerial
3 deployment, is not visible to the eye. Seventy
4 percent of the work is actually getting these pole
5 permits approved through a process of deploying the
6 fiber. The last 30 percent is actually tacking up
7 the fiber and delivering the process to the – the
8 fiber to the homes. What we do when we do a deal
9 and go out and talk to a local government, talk to
10 local pole owner, is we actually design that
11 project, and then we actually send subcontractors
12 out to walk every single pole line, to walk it out,
13 to put their eyeballs on every structure that we're
14 going to build to, so we know the exact poles that
15 we need to get to, where we need to go underground
16 if there's not pole infrastructure there, or if we
17 can't work out a deal with the pole owner.

18 So all of that walk-out and all of that design
19 and all of that pole permitting is, by far, the
20 hardest work, even under the best-case scenario,
21 under an aerial deployment, that's a lot of time
22 that goes into deploying this. But we're doing it,
23 as I talked about; we're meeting with the co-ops,
24 we're meeting with the local governments.

25 And there's two final slides that we'll

1 present to you today. I can go to the next slide,
2 just to tell you.

3 [Reference: Presentation Slide 20]

4 In addition to the RDOF that we won, we are
5 trying to synergize on that federal money and do
6 individual deals with counties who also got ARPA
7 money. So, the RDOF money covered certain unserved
8 census blocks in multiple counties across South
9 Carolina. What we've done is, in four counties in
10 particular – we've gone out and talked to many,
11 many counties – in four counties, in particular,
12 we've shown them the census blocks in their county
13 that will be covered by our investment and the RDOF
14 investment, and asked if they wanted to do a
15 massive design across the county and contribute
16 some of their ARPA funds to cover the areas that we
17 did not get under the RDOF – the low-density areas.

18 These four counties, we have contracted with
19 to complete the counties out. That is Dillon
20 County, Darlington County, Florence County, and
21 Cherokee County. And, in particular, obviously,
22 the relationship with the pole owner was key in
23 some of those counties, because we knew it was
24 going to be easy to get permits and go fast.

25 [Reference: Presentation Slide 21]

1 But those four counties, we have contracted
2 over the next two years to not just do the RDOF,
3 but to leverage the fact that we're already going
4 to have crews in the area, to go ahead and finish
5 out other neighborhoods in other low-density areas
6 that are adjacent to the RDOF, so we can finish out
7 the entire county. So we're very proud about that.

8 And we also are planning on participating in
9 the State Broadband Office. We work very closely
10 with the Office of Regulatory Staff, who now has
11 the State Broadband Office as of July 1st. We're
12 planning on participating – we participated in
13 their grant programs in the CARES Act and we're
14 planning on participating in their State grant
15 program I think that they're anticipating to have
16 later this year.

17 So we're trying to make sure that all of these
18 federal programs work in tandem with each other, so
19 we're not building over top of other folks and
20 federal money is not fighting other federal money.
21 That's the point of this slide.

22 The last slide is just to show you, in
23 particular, maybe a little bit of detail on how
24 this works. But what you can see in Florence
25 County – and you can read the information about the

1 deal we have there – the blue areas are where we
2 had RDOF, which was already funded projects on a
3 timeline where Charter was building to these
4 unserved areas with federal subsidy; the red areas
5 are where the county – we did a design with the
6 county and did a walk-out, and they were also
7 unserved areas, but we just didn't win those areas
8 in the auction. So the county allowed us to go do
9 a design for further unserved areas, and we're
10 working with the Office of Regulatory Staff, as
11 well, with their State Mapping Office, which they
12 are fantastic. They have great maps there to try
13 and get to the unserved areas of the county. So
14 that's what we call a synergy project. We can
15 take, leverage the investment that we've made with
16 the RDOF program, and layer on top of that other
17 monies that are coming through the ARPA program.

18 With that, I'll conclude my comments. And,
19 Marva, if you want to make any final comments,
20 we'll take additional questions.

21 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** Thank you.

22 I mostly want to thank you-all for your
23 attention and for the opportunity to share where
24 Charter is going as it relates to our commitment to
25 closing the digital divide. I want to thank you,

1 Chairman Williams, for including us, and Vice Chair
2 and Commissioners, for giving us your attention
3 today.

4 Ben's last comment is something that's fairly
5 significant to us. We talk about how long it's
6 going to take, and we talked already about needing
7 to go as fast as possible and, in order to get to
8 as many homes as possible, we had to be efficient
9 with our investment. So, it is a concern for us,
10 Chair Williams; you asked about whether we truly
11 have an obligation, what's the risk if we don't
12 build our RDOF locations. We certainly have
13 meaningful, substantive penalties; and as we look
14 to continue to extend, not just to build the
15 locations we committed to but to do them as fast as
16 possible – the law allows six years; we don't want
17 to take six years; we want to go as fast as
18 possible – we're trying to find ways to make
19 accelerating that investment make sense.

20 So the way for the State, I think, to be most
21 efficient is to make sure that, as we allocate some
22 of these additional funds that are coming forward,
23 we allocate those funds in areas that don't already
24 have money allocated to them, so that, as has been
25 noted, we're not fighting federal dollars with

1 State-allocated federal dollars, so that
2 everybody's going as fast as we can possibly move
3 to every single location that needs service.

4 So we really appreciate the opportunity. We
5 appreciate the commitment that you-all are making
6 and the State of South Carolina is making, to make
7 sure that every citizen has service, and we're
8 happy to be a part of it.

9 Any other questions?

10 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Chairman Williams?

11 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Commissioner Williams?

12 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Thank you.

13 Thank you for bringing this to us. It's
14 exciting to get to kind of hear this in first
15 person. My first question has to do with the map
16 that you gave us on page 13 of the PowerPoint. And
17 as I read it, the dark – the medium blue, it says
18 "County currently served by Spectrum network."
19 Does that mean you cover the entire county? Or
20 does that mean you –

21 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** No, ma'am. No –

22 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** – cover a piece –

23 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** – ma'am. The –

24 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** – of it? Okay.

25 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** – medium blue is

1 probably not the perfect way to show that. That's
2 a graphic that we've used in the past. It means we
3 touch a corner of the county –

4 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay.

5 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** – or serve
6 somewhere in the county.

7 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay.

8 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** And we use it
9 for different purposes, but that is – thank you for
10 asking. That could be misconstrued.

11 If it's medium blue, it just means that we
12 serve – we have a franchise with the county and we
13 serve some portion of the county. The more
14 important part of that map would be the dark blue –

15 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Right.

16 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** – which is where
17 our network serves broadband. And, of course, the
18 green, which is where we've committed to build
19 under the RDOF 904 auction program.

20 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay. Thank you –

21 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** Thank you –

22 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** – for that –

23 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** – for asking.

24 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Thank you for that
25 clarification.

1 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** Yes, ma'am.

2 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** I'm not sure the
3 best way to ask this, but you – what share of the
4 450,000 South Carolinians are you likely to cover
5 in the next six years? You can change that
6 question around, like if I should've asked by
7 census tract or in some other way.

8 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** You mean,
9 Charter? Or all of the industry?

10 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Well, if you can
11 answer both, wonderful, but I really am asking
12 about Charter.

13 **MR. BEN BREAZEALE [CHARTER]:** You have a great
14 resource in South Carolina – the Office of
15 Regulatory Staff, the State Broadband Office – who
16 would be able to answer that question, you know,
17 better than I. But I think the most recent
18 statistics from the Office of Regulatory Staff show
19 450,000 South Carolinians, but I think it's around
20 180,000 structures. So houses versus citizens, I
21 guess is what I would say.

22 We have committed, under the Charter 904
23 auction RDOF program, just Charter has stepped up
24 to somewhere around 80-90,000 of that 180,000
25 unserved structures. Now, mapping, of course, is

1 somewhat of an art. You know, you have to walk
2 out – the ones in Florence, we know, because we
3 walked out; we walked every pole line, we looked at
4 every structure. But in general, if those numbers
5 stay in place, Charter has about 50 percent of the
6 unserved households, if all of those numbers are
7 sound. And I would definitely check with Jim
8 Stritzinger at the Office of Broadband, to make
9 sure those numbers are right. But that's the rough
10 cut, if that helps.

11 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** That's exactly what
12 I was asking. Thank you.

13 My last question is kind of hypothetical, but
14 it's to help me understand the challenges of
15 underground service. If – and I realize this is
16 unlikely to happen, but if you were moving into an
17 area that already had underground utilities, does
18 that change the cost dramatically?

19 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** We actually
20 usually follow the utilities, just –

21 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay.

22 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** – as you noted.
23 So –

24 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay.

25 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** – if the

1 utilities are already underground, we're going
2 underground –

3 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay.

4 **MS. MARVA JOHNSON [CHARTER]:** – because we
5 don't actually own the poles; we're always
6 attaching to the utility's infrastructure in that
7 sense. So if they're on poles, we go on the pole.
8 If they're underground, we're happy to go
9 underground, as well.

10 **COMMISSIONER C. WILLIAMS:** Okay. Thank you
11 for the clarification. Thanks again for being
12 here.

13 No further questions.

14 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** Chair Williams?

15 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Commissioner Caston.

16 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** To build on Commissioner
17 Williams' question, because I just heard numbers,
18 like the 450,000 population. That's the estimated
19 population in South Carolina that doesn't have
20 broadband service, correct?

21 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir.

22 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** And I heard you talk
23 about structures.

24 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir.

25 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** And I tend to think of

1 that as, you know, a customer – I – okay, we had a,
2 say, a meter at a structure. Depending on the
3 enumeration district or whatever, it may be 2.8
4 people per structure. So I guess what I'm trying
5 to determine or get a feel for, 450,000 people, and
6 you said that many structures, what population is
7 that? What percentage of that 450,000?

8 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** If you do the
9 rough cut of 5 million South Carolina citizens and
10 450,000 citizens without it, it matches up with the
11 91 percent served or 9 percent unserved by the
12 FCC's calculations. So you did the math perfectly.
13 I'm not a mathematician; obviously, you are. But I
14 did the quick math and I think it matches up with
15 what you were saying: 170-180,000 structures
16 equals 450,000 citizens. That's about 2.6 or 2.7
17 citizens per household. I think that's how the
18 math works, Commissioner, but forgive me if –
19 again, I didn't get an A in math.

20 **COMMISSIONER CASTON:** I probably didn't,
21 either.

22 [Laughter]

23 Thank you, very much.

24 **MR. BEN BREAZEAL [CHARTER]:** Yes, sir.

25 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** All right. Any more

1 questions from Commissioners?

2 [No response]

3 Attorney Moser?

4 **MS. MOSER:** Nothing further.

5 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Office of Regulatory
6 Staff.

7 **MR. HUBER:** Nothing further from ORS. Thank
8 you, Mr. Chairman.

9 **CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAMS:** Ladies and gentlemen,
10 thank you so much for joining us today. I think
11 it's fair to say we enjoyed your presentation. It
12 was very informative, and we appreciate you taking
13 the time to come and present to us.

14 If there's nothing else, we are adjourned.

15 [WHEREUPON, at 11:58 a.m., the
16 proceedings in the above-entitled matter
17 were adjourned.]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM-GNSC, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing is, to the best of my skill and ability, a true and correct transcript of all the proceedings had regarding a requested allowable ex parte briefing in the above-captioned matter before the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, on this the 30th day of March, 2022.



Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M|GNSC
Hearings Reporter - Public Service Commission
of South Carolina

Notary Public in/for the State of South Carolina
My Commission expires: January 12, 2031.